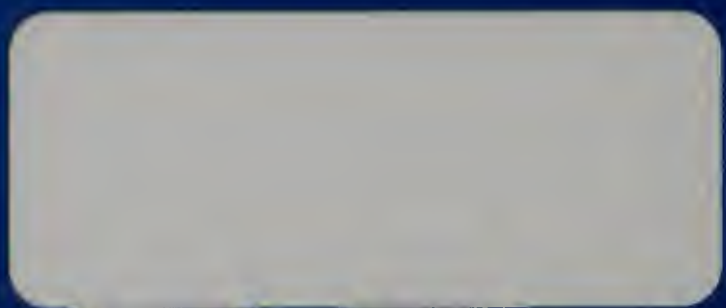


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Plan Prepared by: James P. Domino, Assistant Superintendent,
Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park
For: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Parks Division
Region 3, Bozeman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This plan was produced by a planning committee of Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff, with input from the general public, park visitors, interest groups, other Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff, and representatives from various federal, state and local government agencies. The planning committee was comprised of the following individuals: Jim Domino, Assistant Superintendent; Lee Flath, Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park Superintendent; Steve Lewis, Region 3 Supervisor; Arnold Olsen, Parks Division Administrator; Paul Valle, Landscape Architect; Jerry Walker, Region 3 Parks Manager.

We would like to give special recognition to members of the public and interest groups who took the time to participate through open houses, meetings, and written comments.



LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN: A management plan serves to establish the overall direction for the provision of visitor services, the management of natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources, and the development of all associated facilities and programs. It is a working, dynamic document that guides the day to day operation of a park, as well as serving as the basis for management decisions and actions. This is the first comprehensive management plan developed for Lewis & Clark Caverns. The planning process began in 1993 with the initiation of the Tourism and Marketing Plan. An environmental assessment has been prepared for this project and is included in the full report. The comprehensive plan outlines in detail the direction the park will take in terms of resource protection, visitor services and facility and program development over the next ten years.

COMPONENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN (as listed in the full report)

- Chapter 1 - Introduction, Park History, Mission Statement, 10 Year Vision, Management Goals and Objectives
- Chapter 2 - Part 1: Regional Analysis (park tourism and marketing summary); Part 2: Park Resources (includes operations and maintenance budgets; staffing; inventory of park facilities and resources; visitation)
- Chapter 3 - Resources Protection & Visitor Accommodation; Identification of Issues, Public Comment, Preferred Options and Benefits of Preferred Options
- Chapter 4 - Identification of Management Plan Alternatives and Preferred Alternative; Environmental Assessment and Review
- Chapter 5 - Costs, Implementing and Monitoring; Goals and Objectives Timeline

Significance Statements: Significance statements help to define the park mission by describing the importance and distinctiveness of the aggregate of resources in the park. The significance statements essentially set the stage for the identification of management issues as they relate to these assets, and provide a focus for future interpretation of park resources.

- Lewis and Clark Caverns presents a highly decorated, vertical profile cave system with mature formations, easily accessible to visitors.
- The Caverns were designated a national monument by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 and named in commemoration of the Lewis and Clark expedition.
- The Civilian Conservation Corps development of the park in the late 1930s made the cave system easily accessible via a paved access road and trail system, and fulfilled requirements for the establishment of the area as a state park.
- The land within the park is mostly in a primitive, undeveloped state, with approximately 17% of the total acreage easily accessible to park visitors (approximately 500 acres out of 3000).
- Picturesque vistas of the Jefferson River valley and nearby mountain ranges are available from the upper visitor center and along the 3 mile access road.
- The park contains a wide variety of native plant and wildlife species, including a rare nursery colony of western big eared bats (a designated species of special concern), easily viewed by the public.
- Early Native American artifacts and historical 19th century mines have been documented in various localities within the undeveloped areas of the park.
- The park serves as a highly visible focal point for local, regional, statewide and, on a limited basis, international tourism.

Park Mission / 10 Year Vision:

The mission statement describes in broad terms the purpose of Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park. The mission statement serves to provide a more focused direction for the identification of issues and the development of management goals and objectives.

The Lewis and Clark Caverns Mission Statement:

"Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park provides for the preservation and protection of the underground caverns environment and above ground ecosystem, and through its interpretative programs and recreational facilities, provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about the areas unique natural and historic resources".



Ten Year Vision

"What do we want Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park to look like in ten years, and how do we get there?" This question is answered in broad terms by the following vision statement:

"Within ten years the Caverns will provide an expanded range of recreational opportunities, including trail and river related activities. The experience of park visitors will be improved by focusing on quality visitor services and facilities, enhanced interpretive programs and elevated resource protection efforts. Educational opportunities for children will be emphasized by continuing to provide educational trunks to schools throughout the state and facilitating school group tours of the cave system and park. Visitor satisfaction will be monitored using on-site surveys throughout the ten year period to insure a quality experience is being provided.

The park will increase its importance as a destination tourist attraction, encouraging visitors to stay longer and visit other attractions in the area. The rustic character of existing facilities and the park as a whole will be maintained by concentrating new facilities within the existing developed areas of the park. The 1930's era appearance of the facilities within the park will be perpetuated to the greatest extent possible.

The park will continue to promote a positive, cooperative and open dialogue with adjacent landowners and nearby local businesses on such issues as tourism, weed control, hunting, game damage, and illegal trespass. Weed infestations within the park will be significantly reduced and controlled. Employee and visitor safety will be primary emphasis areas throughout the period. The park will strive to keep pace with increased visitation and use by continually evaluating daily operations and staff scheduling, making adjustments when required. Requests for increased operations and maintenance budgets and additional staffing will be based solely on maintaining and enhancing park resources and facilities, providing a quality visitor experience, and ensuring visitor and employee safety."

MANAGEMENT GOALS

1. To preserve and protect the parks unique natural, cultural and historic resources.
2. To provide an educational experience for park visitors which highlights the unique resources found both above and below the ground.
3. To provide a full range of non-motorized recreational opportunities and enhance the park's significance as a destination tourist attraction, while maintaining the desired rustic character of the parks facilities and visitors services.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Enhance the park's significance as a destination attraction and as a revenue source for the state park system by increasing the average length of stay of visitors from .05 to 1.0 nights, while maintaining visitation within a range of 65,000 to 75,000 annually. This will be achieved by expanding the range of recreational activities and facilities to include additional hiking trails, hunting, river floating, fishing, wildlife viewing, group use, and a new visitor center, by 2002, to be coordinated by the parks administrative staff.
2. Enhance the protection of park resources by creating three management zones (developed, semi-developed and primitive). All management, maintenance, operations, visitor activities, developments and programs will be evaluated according to the conditions outlined under the following six major headings: visitor experience; access; natural resource management; facilities; cultural/historic resources; and maintenance. This will be initiated with the approval of the final plan by the Region 3 FWP Supervisor by the end of 1997.
3. Improve the quality of the recreational experience of visitors by enhancing interpretive programs, facilities and concession services, including information on wildlife, plants, geology, history, hunting and fishing, the old gypsum mines, geography, and the Lewis & Clark Expedition. Concession services will include equipment rental options. New programs will include guided nature walks, river floats, and summer amphitheater shows. Cave tour enhancements will involve more structured tours for school groups, the use of educational trunks, the potential for off-trail public tours, a reduction in tour group size, and off-season special events, by 2007, coordinated by the parks administrative staff.

These objectives will be achieved through the actions identified under the issues and management zoning sections of the plan.

Management Zoning: The management zoning concept focuses on providing a diversity of visitor recreational experiences based on the parks mission statement and taking into account existing and proposed facilities, the location of natural and historic or cultural attributes, ease of visitor access and required maintenance. The zones established under the management zoning concept would permit visitors to better understand what activities and services are available in different parts of the park. In addition management strategies outlined for each zone would guide the actions of the park manager and staff in maintaining the integrity of the zoning system as well as providing direction for day to day management and operations. This action fulfills objective 2.

Based on the current location of existing facilities, trails, roads, utility corridors and potential developments in the campground area, and the location of undeveloped and primitive areas, the subsequent management zones are identified as follows:

Developed Zone - (approximately 500 acres); Semi-Developed Zone - (approximately 1000 acres); Primitive Zone - (approximately 1500 acres) See the master-site plan map for zone locations.

Principles Common to all Management Zones: The park will be managed in such a way as to maintain and enhance ecosystem diversity and integrity, including but not limited to:

1. **Scenery** - The scenic vistas of the Jefferson River Canyon and surrounding hills and mountains both within and outside the park constitutes an important and significant resource, attributing greatly toward a quality recreational experience for park visitors. Scenic view sheds will be identified and protected to the greatest extent possible using the management zoning concept.

2. **Historic and Cultural Resources** - Historic and cultural resources will be identified and protected to the greatest extent possible, following all applicable State Historic Preservation Office guidelines and laws and, where appropriate, interpreted to park visitors in accordance with the provisions detailed in the park interpretative plan.

3. **Flora and Fauna** - Wildlife and plant species diversity will be identified and monitored to identify any changes that are occurring. The sources of change will be identified if possible and mitigation actions taken to protect the parks biological diversity and specific habitats such as wetlands, riparian areas, or those related to caves, with an emphasis placed on threatened, endangered or special concern species.

4. **Geological Resources** - The above and below ground geologic features will be preserved and maintained in such a way as to perpetuate the pristine quality of these unique resources.

5. **Water/Air Quality** - Water and air quality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible in full accordance with local, state and federal water and air quality laws.

6. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** - Accessibility for visitors with disabilities will be provided to the greatest extent possible, recognizing that access may be limited in some situations due to the unalterable qualities of some natural features, such as those found in the cave, and rugged topography.

7. **Noxious Weed Control** - Extensive efforts will be made to control the establishment and spread of noxious weeds in conjunction with the directives of the Jefferson County Weed Board and Region Three Noxious Weed Control Management Plan.

8. **Recreational Experience** - An emphasis will be placed on providing park visitors with the highest quality recreational experience, including the identification and promotion of appropriate recreational activities, interpretation of major park themes, maintaining visitor and employee safety, control of extraneous noise, mitigation of existing or potential user conflicts, and monitoring of visitor satisfaction.

ISSUES AND PUBLIC COMMENT: Three public open house meetings were scheduled as part of the public comment and review process. An outline of issues developed from previous visitor surveys, public focus group sessions, and FWP staff comment was presented at each meeting along with possible options for addressing each point. Participants were first asked to comment on the proposed issues and to add, delete or change any or all of the issues if they so desired.

Participants were then asked to select what they felt was the best way to address these issues from a list of various options. They were also asked to present other options if they did not support any of those presented. Option A is the no action option in all cases. Option A would continue existing park policy for addressing each issue presented. A total of 42 people attended the open house meetings. Twenty four provided comments on the various issues and alternatives.

Additional public input into the planning process was obtained through the 1994 Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park Visitor Survey, conducted on-site in August of 1994 and two focus group sessions conducted as part of the parks tourism and marketing plan.

Preferred Options: The preferred options to address these issues are also presented. The preferred options are based on input and recommendations from FWP staff, various public surveys and meetings, input from other resource management professionals, and comments obtained from many interested organizations and individuals. Cost estimations for each of the preferred options are also provided (page 11).

Benefits of Preferred Options: The benefits of each preferred option are presented with a brief summary of how the preferred option will enhance the parks natural resources, recreational opportunities, visitor services, and economic activity.

Summary of Issues, Options, Comments, Preferred Options and Benefits:

1. New Trails: There is potential for developing additional trails in the park. In the 1950s and early 1960s a series of fire break jeep trails were constructed throughout the park. These narrow roads were never maintained, but many are still clearly evident today. These old roads would function very well as trails, requiring for the most part only minor modifications and the placement of information and direction signs. The majority of new trails proposed would follow these existing roads. Options B and C differ only in the number of trails to be developed, with option B developing all potential trail routes and option C developing a smaller number of selected trails. The only existing designated trails in the park are the nature trail loop in the northeast corner of the park, and the cave entrance and exit trails.

Public Comments: Option B received the most support based on comments received from the three open house meetings. The majority of summer visitors answered neutral or no opinion when answering this question on the 1994 survey. 37% of summer survey respondents did support the development of a trail to the river access site.

Option B is the preferred option

Option B would essentially incorporate the majority of the existing old jeep roads into a park trail system. The system would provide trail access to roughly two thirds of the park and would greatly enhance the recreational opportunities available with minimal costs and environmental impacts. This action addresses objective 1.

Benefits of Preferred Option:

A. Natural Resource Related Benefits:

The development of an interconnecting trail system would greatly enhance public understanding and appreciation of the park's unique natural, cultural and historic resources found outside of the well known cave system. Public awareness and sensitivity of the need for continuing resource protection and enhancement efforts would be accentuated.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Recreational activities will be greatly expanded beyond what is currently provided with little or no impact to the park environment. An increase in park trail opportunities has been cited as a very high priority issue through the various visitor surveys and public meetings conducted as part of the management planning process.

C. Economic Benefits:

An increase in the recreational activities available at the park will substantiate an increase in the average length of stay of park visitors. The current length of stay for visitors is 1/2 day (.5). By increasing the average length of stay to approximately 1.0 days the direct economic impact to the area surrounding the park would increase by approximately \$500,000. The existing economic impact to the surrounding area is estimated to be \$1,374,000 annually (McCool, 1993).

2. Trail Use: This issue concerns the types of use that will be permitted on new or existing trails in the park. The types of use proposed include hiking and horseback riding. Due to the relatively small number of trails proposed for the park and the short distances involved, motorized trail use will not be proposed as an option under this management plan. The various options essentially address the number of trails open to multiple use. Option A, the no action option, would continue the existing policy of no new designated trails other than those already in place in the nature trail complex. Option B would designate all new park trails as hiking only. Option C would open park trails to horse and hiking use, with the exception of the trails located east of the main access road. The trails on the east side of the access road are part of the nature trail complex and would be designated hiking only under all options due to the various interpretative stations located along the route, steep terrain and narrow trail width.

Public Comment: Option A and B received nearly the same number of supporting comments.

Option B is the preferred option

Option B would enhance the existing trail system by designating new hiking trails within the park. Horseback riding would be restricted to paved park roads only. FWP management and staff believe that horseback riding in the semi-developed and primitive management zones would cause significant natural resource damage to trail corridors and would increase the spread of noxious weeds. Relatively short trail lengths and ample horseback riding opportunities on nearby National Forest and BLM lands are other justifications for not allowing this type of trail use. This action addresses objectives 1 and 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option:

A. Natural Resource Related Benefits:

Additional hiking trails would have relatively little impact in terms of soil compaction, vegetative cover loss, and weed proliferation. These impacts are far greater in areas open to horseback use. Also there would be less ground and cover disturbance at hiking only trail heads due to the minimal trail head facility developments necessary, as opposed to the major developments usually required for equestrian use.

B: Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Hiking is increasing in popularity throughout the United States. The park also receives many inquiries on hiking opportunities. The Link Gulch and Limespur FAS trails would become popular attractions for our visitors and allow enhanced access to many lesser know areas of the park, increasing both recreational and educational opportunities.

C: Economic Benefits

The addition of new hiking trails will greatly assist in enticing individuals and groups of visitors to possibly stay an extra day or night in the park. This has the potential of increasing the direct and indirect economic benefits related to visitation at the Caverns for the surrounding communities.

3. Campground Improvements: This issue involves potential improvements to the campground complex. Option B involves the following:

A. A new 10 site group use camping and day use area would be constructed on the west side of the campground, complete with a vault rest room, water faucet and picnic shelter.

B. Playground equipment (slide, swing set) would be provided at a location within the campground/cabin complex.

C. Improvement of the amphitheater lighting system.

D. An area on the west side of the existing campground and south of the proposed group use area would be designated for future campground expansion in the event that more campsites are deemed necessary and desirable.

E. Construction of a new vault rest room to serve the three cabin sites (for off season use).

Option C is similar to Option B except that the existing three cabins would be relocated to an area north of their current location to form a separate "cabin village" complete with a separate rest room and water faucet for camping cabin users. Additional cabins (up to 8) would also be constructed. The former cabin sites in the main campground would be converted to full hookup RV sites.

Public Comments: Option B received the most support at the open house meetings. Results of the summer visitor survey related to this issue were inclusive, with most respondents indicating neutral or no opinion.



Option B is the preferred option

The inclusion of additional camping cabins and RV hookup sites in the campground complex would most likely place the park in direct competition with privately owned campgrounds in the surrounding area. The private sector is best suited to provide the full service accommodations requested by RV owners and vacationers desiring a higher level of camping facilities and services. There is also little public demand for additional camping cabins. Any future campground expansion would be dependent on increased and sustained occupancy rates above and beyond a set standard over a period of time. This action addresses objective 1.

Benefits of the Preferred Option:

A: Natural Resource Benefits

The proposed campground improvements, specifically related to the new group use area, will alleviate the problem of large day use and camping groups negatively impacting campground vegetation due to visitor use spreading beyond the hardened, designated campsites. This often occurs with large groups due to the limited space available in individual campsites and the lack of designated group use facilities. Construction of a new vault rest room to serve cabin users during the off season will reduce a potential health hazard due to visitors not using the designated winter latrines because of the long walk involved.

B: Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

The quality of the recreational experience for campers and large groups will be enhanced by separating group use from the main campground, thereby greatly reducing the potential for conflict between large and small groups in the campground complex. The addition of playground equipment will fulfill an increasing public demand for such facilities and enhance recreational opportunities for children. Improved amphitheater lighting will enhance the summer guest speaker campfire talk program.

C: Economic Benefits:

Group use activity in the park such as family reunions, company picnics, and commercially sponsored scenic and natural travel tours will be increased with the provision of a designated group use area, resulting in a direct positive impact to the parks earned revenue and to the area's tourism dependent economy.

4. Hunting: Opening portions of the park to big game and upland game bird hunting has been investigated as part of this management planning process. Three options were considered to address this issue. Option A would continue the existing policy of no hunting in the park. Option B would open only the primitive zone for hunting, with the semi-developed and developed management zones remaining closed. Option C would open park land to the west of cave mountain (primitive zone) for hunting and allow limited hunting with weapon restrictions in the semi-developed and developed management zones. Safety zones would be established within the developed zone where no hunting would be allowed.

Public Comments: Based on the results of the August 1994 visitor survey Montana residents are evenly split on the hunting issue, with one third supporting the concept, one third neutral or no opinion and one third opposed. Non-residents are generally opposed to the idea, with only 10% agreeing or strongly agreeing that hunting be permitted. Based on comments received at the three open house meetings, which essentially represents local and adjacent community opinions, 82% of those who submitted comments feel that some form of hunting should be allowed in the park.

Option B is the preferred option

Option B would provide the opportunity for enhanced hunting access and the desired management of game populations in the park, while at the same time providing our non-hunting visitors the opportunity to visit the park without conflicting with hunters. This action addresses objectives 1 and 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

Opening a portion of Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park to upland gamebird and big game hunting would allow for enhanced management of the park's game species, specifically the mule deer population. With the utilization of hunting as a management tool the overall health of game populations within the park and surrounding area will be enhanced by maintaining the limited carrying capacity of the available range and enhancing vegetative forage viability.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Additional hunting opportunities will be provided to the public in an area with little public land and limited access to private land. Non-hunting visitors will still have the opportunity to visit the park without conflicting with hunters. Wildlife viewing opportunities will be available for visitors year-around with the implementation of the preferred option.

C. Economic Benefits:

Both direct (park user fees) and indirect (increased personal spending in adjacent communities) economic benefits will result due to an overall increase in park recreational opportunities.

5. **Cave Tours:** Three management options were presented to address potential alterations in tour operations. Based on information obtained from both internal and external surveys and the open house meetings there are two main concerns related to existing tour operations. One, that the current maximum group size of 35 per group may be too large. Large group sizes tend to diminish the quality of the tour and often times make it difficult for the tour guides to monitor their entire tour group. Two, that small children (under 5 years of age) often times make it difficult for others in the group to enjoy their tour (the reasons being obvious). The options to address these concerns are:

Option A - No action (maintain existing policies of 35 maximum per group and no age restrictions).

Option B - Reduce maximum group size from 35 to 30.

Option C - Maximum group size of 30, no children under 5 on tours.

Public Comments: The vast majority of visitors surveyed in the 1994 visitor study responded in a positive manner to questions about their cave tour experience, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the existing cave tour program. The two most commonly cited problems by both Caverns staff and visitors are the basis for the various options presented above. 31% of visitor respondents indicated that tour group size was too large. 23% felt that small children were distracting on their tour.

Option B is the preferred option.

Option B, reduce the maximum group size from 35 to 30 would address the most commonly cited tour problem by our visitors and staff. It is felt that age restrictions would negatively impact to an unacceptable degree the opportunities for family groups to tour the cave. This action addresses objective 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

Smaller group sizes will enhance the guide ability to maintain control and monitor group actions, thereby increasing the level of protection for the cave environment.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

There is a direct correlation between cave tour group size and the quality of the cave tour experience for visitors. Smaller tour sizes allow for better interaction between the guide and visitors and provide for enhanced interpretation of cave features not possible with larger groups. Visitor safety will also be improved.

C. Economic Benefits:

A higher quality experience will indirectly impact the tourism related economic benefits provided by visitors to the park by enhancing the parks positive image conveyed by previous visitors, potentially encouraging both new and repeat visits.

6. **Cave Accessibility (off-trail tours):** This issue involves enhancing the existing tour program with the investigation of offering special off-trail tours. Currently only park staff are permitted off-trail within the cave. An ever increasing number of visitors are inquiring about off-trail tours.

Option A - No action

Option B - Initiate an investigation to explore the possibility of offering special off-trail guided tours to areas of the cave not normally open to visitors.

Public Comments: Option B was supported by both park staff and the public.

Option B is the preferred the option.

Option B, investigate the possibility of providing special off-trail tours would greatly enhance the existing popular cave tour program. This investigation is a component of the cave management plan. This addresses objectives 1 and 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

By specifying certain areas of the cave as open to special off-trail tours, other more delicate, pristine areas of the cave would be placed permanently off-limits to visitors and staff. Access to these closed areas would be allowed only for specific scientific or management related purposes. Specific details concerning the investigation of off-trail tours are outlined in the cave management plan.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

The provision of off-trail public tours would open new recreational opportunities for visitors wishing to have a more challenging cave tour experience. This type of tour would also appeal to amateur spelunkers and caving groups (grottos).

C. Economic Benefits:

Economic benefits would be enhanced by the addition of a new and unique recreational experience.

7. **Jefferson River Access:** This issue involves the development of the Limespur Fishing Access Site (FAS) on the Jefferson River. No formal access currently exists. The existing primitive road and vehicle turn around receives light to moderate use by anglers and river floaters. Access to the river currently involves crossing active rail road tracks.

Option A - No action

Option B - Development of an improved concrete boat ramp access with trailer and vehicle parking, rest room and interpretive displays approximately 100 yards to the east of the primitive launch site. The existing undeveloped launch area would be closed to motorized vehicles.

Option C - This option would involve the development of the existing undeveloped launch area with a new vault rest room and graveled parking lot and access road, plus the facilities listed under option B.

Public Comments: The majority of comments received at the open house meetings were supportive of option C, developing both a primitive and improved access. Summer visitors were supportive of some type of access with a trail to the park campground. Internal FWP comment on this issue was mixed, with options B or C receiving the most support. Note that a safety problem exists due to limited sight distance for vehicles entering or exiting the existing primitive access area.

Option B is the preferred option.

Option B, construction of a developed launch site with boat trailer and vehicle parking, a concrete boat ramp and a vault rest room is the preferred option mainly due to the safety problems related to limited motor vehicle sight distances one experiences when exiting or entering the existing primitive access area. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Design and Construction Bureau recommends the closure of the primitive access to motor vehicles for this reason. This addresses objectives 1 and 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

Natural resource benefits are related to enhanced protection of the Jefferson River riparian zone by providing a "hardened" access point and eliminating unrestricted motorized vehicle travel along shoreline areas.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Recreational opportunities related to fishing, boating and wildlife viewing would be greatly enhanced by the provision of a fully developed river access, easily accessible from the park campground and park trail system.

C. Economic Benefits:

Economic benefits would be enhanced by providing additional water based recreational opportunities, thus increasing the likelihood of longer visitor lengths of stay. Additional economic benefits could involve new concessionaire opportunities related to water-based recreational equipment rentals.

8. Enhanced Concession Services: This issue relates to the development of additional concession services within the park. Option B would investigate the provision of concessionaire services such as a tour bus service, dog kennel, day care, recreational and game equipment rental and selected park maintenance functions. Each of these services would be investigated individually from the other potential services.

Option A - No action Option B - Investigate New Concession Ideas as stated above.

Public Comments: The majority of respondents in the summer survey were neutral or had no opinion on this issue. Comments received at the open house meetings supported the concept of new concession services, such as recreational equipment rentals.

Option B is the preferred option.

Option B was chosen as the preferred course of action due to the increasing demand for these types of services as stated in numerous visitor and employee surveys and recommendations. This action addresses objective 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

Indirect benefits related to natural resource protection and enhancement would be experienced by increasing the visitors range of services related to specific recreational activities, thus increasing visitor appreciation and understanding of the complete spectrum of park resources.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Visitor services and overall visitor satisfaction would be directly enhanced as a result of the proposed concessionaire service expansion.

C. Economic Benefits:

Direct economic benefits would be experienced due to increased concessionaire business activity and profits, resulting in an increase in the revenue provided to the park as stipulated in concessionaire operations contracts.

Issue 9: New Public Contact Center at Park Entrance with Maintenance Office and Permanent Entrance Station: This proposal would involve the construction of a new lower public contact center, including a permanent entrance station and administrative/maintenance office to replace the existing A-Frame and temporary entrance station. The A-Frame information center and temporary entrance station would be removed.

Option A - No action

Option B - Construct the new center/entrance station as planned.

Option C - Upgrade the A-Frame to meet current ADA standards and construct a permanent entrance station.

Public Comments: No comments received

Option B, construction of the new facility as planned, is the preferred option.

Option B was chosen as the preferred option due to the existing safety, structural and disabled accessibility problems associated with the existing A-Frame facility. It is believed that upgrading the A-Frame would not be cost effective or practical. The existing A-Frame location also presents a traffic safety hazard due to confusing traffic flow patterns. The incorporation of a new public contact center at the park entrance would serve to focus management and administrative functions at the park entrance where they would be easily accessed by the public, provide for a single selling point for all park permits, including cave tours, camping, entrance and park passports, and allow park staff to better monitor off-season park activities. This action addresses objectives 1 and 3.

Benefits of Preferred Option

A. Natural Resource Benefits

Natural resource benefits are related to enhanced protection of park resources by providing a single main contact point for all park visitors, and by providing increased security due to enhanced monitoring of off-season activities.

B. Visitor Services/Recreational Opportunity Related Benefits:

Visitor service would be greatly enhanced by providing a single point of sale for all park permits, including cave tour tickets. Safety problems associated with the park access road/highway 2 interchange and pedestrians crossing the entrance road to access the A-Frame would also be alleviated.

C. Economic Benefits:

Economic benefits related to enhanced fee compliance, better public/park staff communications, and the general provision of recreational opportunities within the park and surrounding region would be improved as a result of a main public contact point for all park visitors.

MANAGEMENT PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The options addressing each issue have been combined to form three management alternatives:

Alternative A - Existing park recreational opportunity spectrum (no action alternative)

Alternative B - Enhanced park recreational opportunity spectrum I

Alternative C - Enhanced park recreational opportunity spectrum II

Issue	Alternative Description		
	A (no action)	B (preferred)	C
1) New Trails	nature trail complex only (existing)	full development of all potential trails	development of only major trail corridor
2) Trail Use	no new trails	hiking only	hiking/horse
3) Campground	no new developments	group use/ playground/ amphitheater lighting	relocate existing three cabins to N of campground
4) Hunting	no hunting	developed mgmt. zone, semi-developed mgmt. zone closed; primitive zone open to rifle/ shotgun/bow	developed/ semi-developed mgmt zones open except in safety zones; shotgun/bow only in developed/semi-developed zones
5) Cave Tours	no change: 35 max. group size, no age limit	max. group size 30, no age limit	max group size 30, no children under 5 on tours
6) Cave Accessibility	no public off-trail tours	Investigate off-trail public tours	
7) River Access	no developed access	close existing informal access, develop new access with parking, boat ramp, rest room	develop new access/improve existing informal access
8) Concessions	no new concessions	investigate new concession opportunities	
9) Center/Shop/ Entrance Sta.	no change	new lower public contact center/ entrance station/ offices	upgrade A-Frame, new entrance sta.

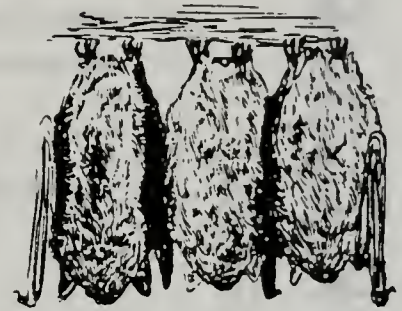


COST ESTIMATES (over the ten year life of the plan)

The following is an estimation of the costs of the implementation and/or construction of the various programs and facilities proposed under the three management alternatives. Estimated costs are for the ten year planning period. Operational cost estimates include planning, MCC crew cost, supplies and materials, informational and interpretive signing, government overhead, special training, etc.

Alternative

	A (no action)	B (preferred)	C
Issue			
Boundary Survey	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
New Trails	\$0	\$8,000	\$4,000
Trail Use	\$0	\$2,000	\$4,000
			(includes horse use)
Campground	\$0	\$115,000 (vault rest room)	\$77,000 (cabins moved)
Hunting	\$0	\$2,000	\$3,000
Cave Tours	\$0	\$0	\$0
Investigate			
Cave Off-Trail			
Tours	\$0	\$1,000	\$0
River Access	\$0	\$42,075	\$73,000
Investigate			
New Concessions	\$0	\$0	\$0
New Lower Public	\$0	\$880,000	\$90,000
Contact Center/			(A-Frame/Ent. Sta./ Shop upgrade)
Total	\$15,000	\$1,065,075	\$266,000



The above cost estimates are based on Design and Construction estimates and cost data from similar past projects.

PREFERRED MANAGEMENT PLAN ALTERNATIVE

Based on public comments received, internal FWP review and the environmental assessment (EA), alternative B, enhanced recreational opportunity spectrum I, has been selected as the preferred alternative. All impacts cited in the EA have been designated as either insignificant or minor with mitigation possible for all identified minor impacts.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PREFERRED MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE: Based on estimates provided by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research the economic impact of alternative B to the surrounding communities and statewide tourism industries would total approximately ten million dollars over the ten year planning cycle, or approximately ten times the cost of implementation.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND PUBLIC REVIEW

Copies of the full management plan report can be obtained at the park office (call 406) 287-3541) or the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 3 Office located on 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59715, phone (406) 994-4042. Comments on this plan are encouraged and should be sent to:

Regional Supervisor
 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 3 Office
 1400 South 19th
 Bozeman, MT 59715
 attn. Lewis & Clark Caverns Management Plan Comments

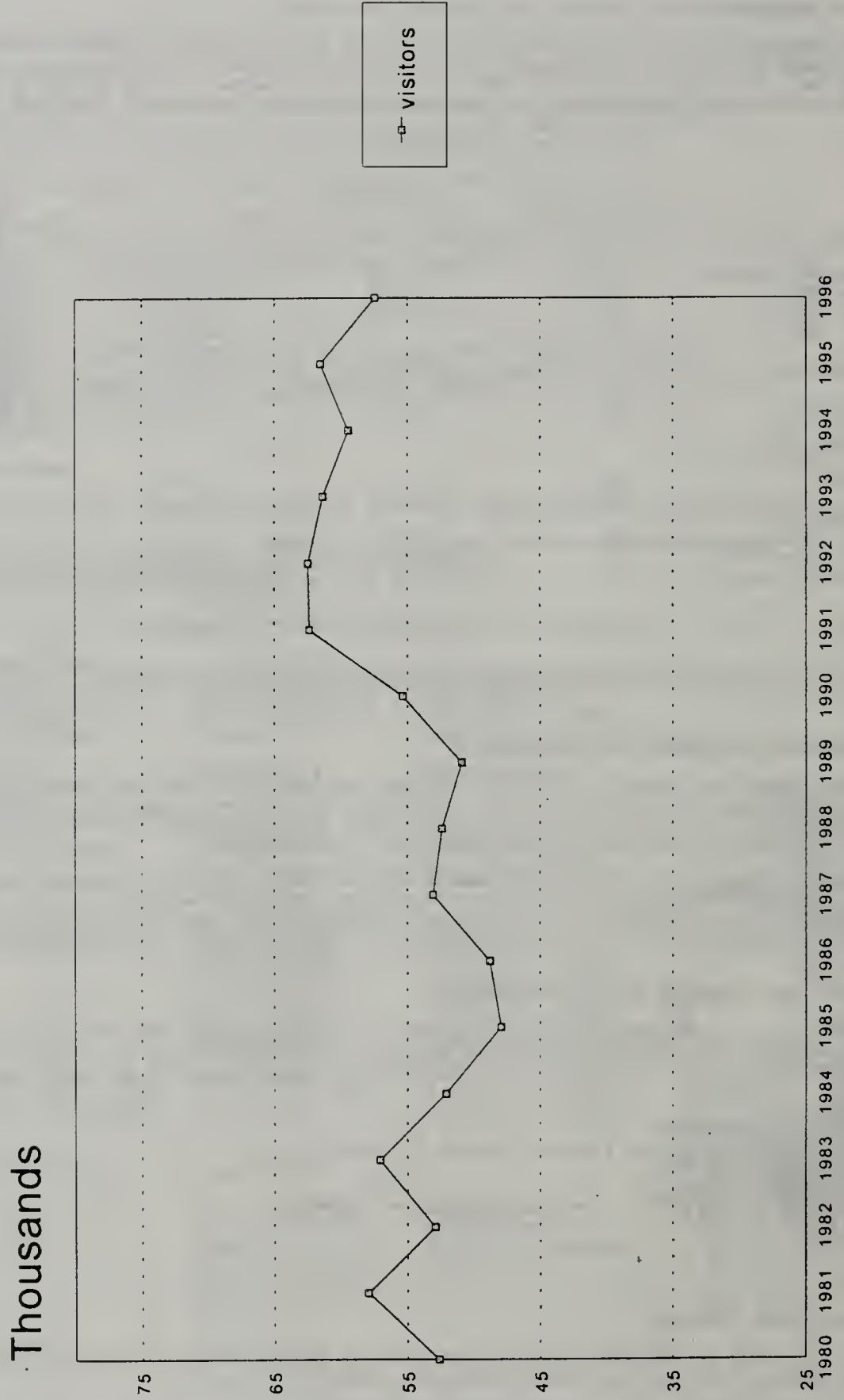
MAPS:

Master Site Plan Map:

The following master site plan map outlines the approximate locations of the proposed developments and delineations for the three management zones.

Hunting Issue Map: For clarification purposes a separate hunting issue map is provided. The map details the proposed option to address this issue.

Visitation at Lewis and Clark Caverns (based on cave tour ticket sales)



KEY

UPPER CASE LETTERING DENOTES EXISTING FEATURES

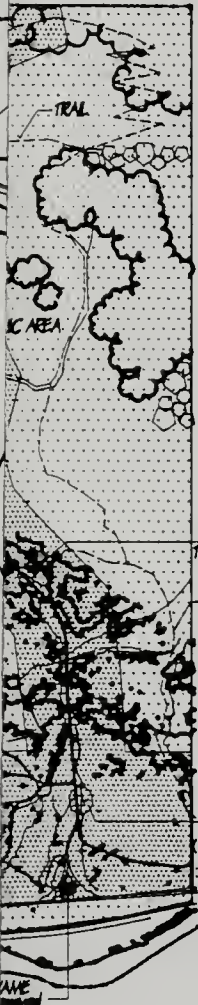
lower case letters denotes proposed improvements

○ ROCK OUTCROPS

☁ EXISTING VEGETATION

TO CARROLL

PICNIC AREA / NATURE TRAIL



MANAGEMENT

DAME
 S...
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P. VALLE	8-06	P. Valle	2-97
DRAWN BY:	DATE:	REVISED BY:	DATE:
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ERNS S. P.

SHEET: 1 of 1

PRELIMINARY MASTER SITE PLAN

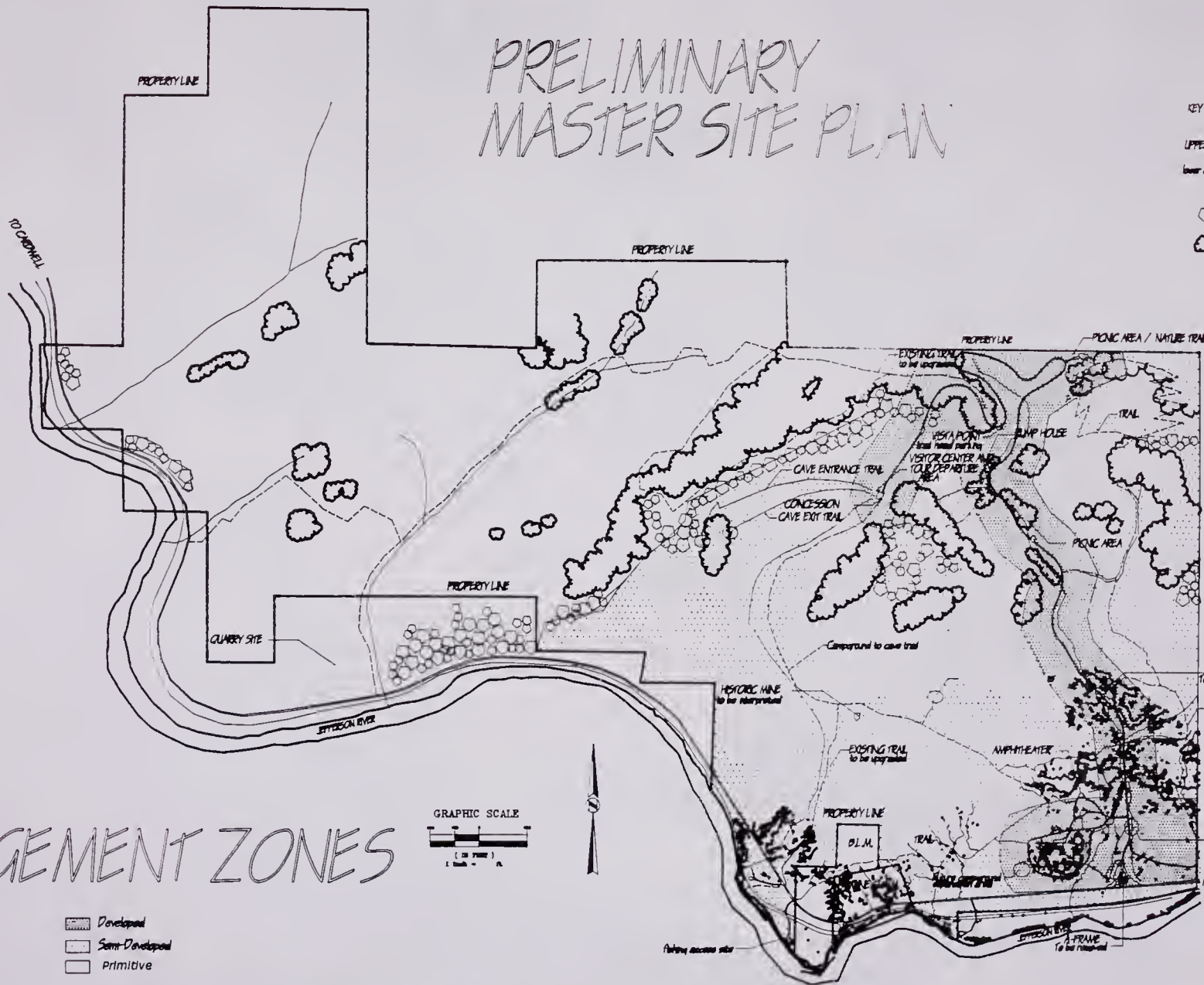
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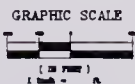
lower case letters denote proposed improvements

○ ROCK OUTCROPS

☁ EXISTING VEGETATION



MANAGEMENT ZONES



- Development
- Semi-Developed
- Primitive

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**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS S. P.
NEAR WHITEHALL M.T.

SHEET: 1 of 1

KEY

UPPER CASE LETTERING DENOTES EXISTING FEATURES

lower case letters denote proposed improvements

○ ROCK OUTCROPS

☁ EXISTING VEGETATION

TO CHANNEL

PONIC AREA / NATURE TRAIL

TRAIL

PONIC AREA

EXISTING SHOP
To be removed

EXISTING ROAD

the existing water pump and the existing center

HIGHWAY 2 TO THREE CROS

HUNTING OF

●●● OPEN

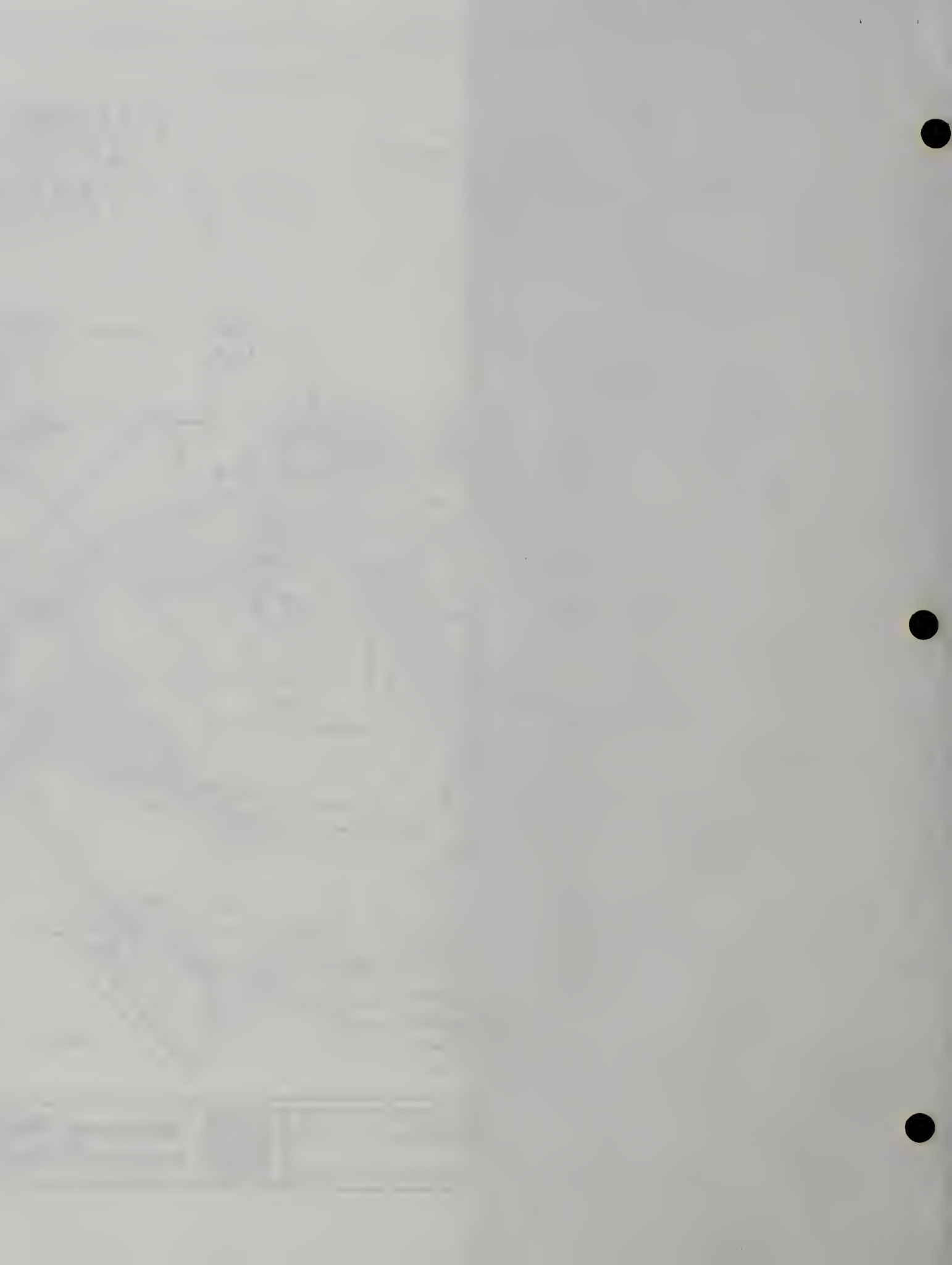
□ OPEN To be removed

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VERNS S. P.

SHEET: 1 of 1



KEY

UPPER CASE LETTERING DENOTES EXISTING FEATURES

lower case letters denote proposed improvements

○ ROCK OUTCROPS

☁ EXISTING VEGETATION

TO CHANNEL

PONIC AREA / NATURE TRAIL

PONIC AREA

EXISTING SHOP
To be removed

EXISTING TRAIL

the existing water pond and the adjacent center

HIGHWAY 2 TO THREEFORS

HUNTING OF

●●●● OPEN

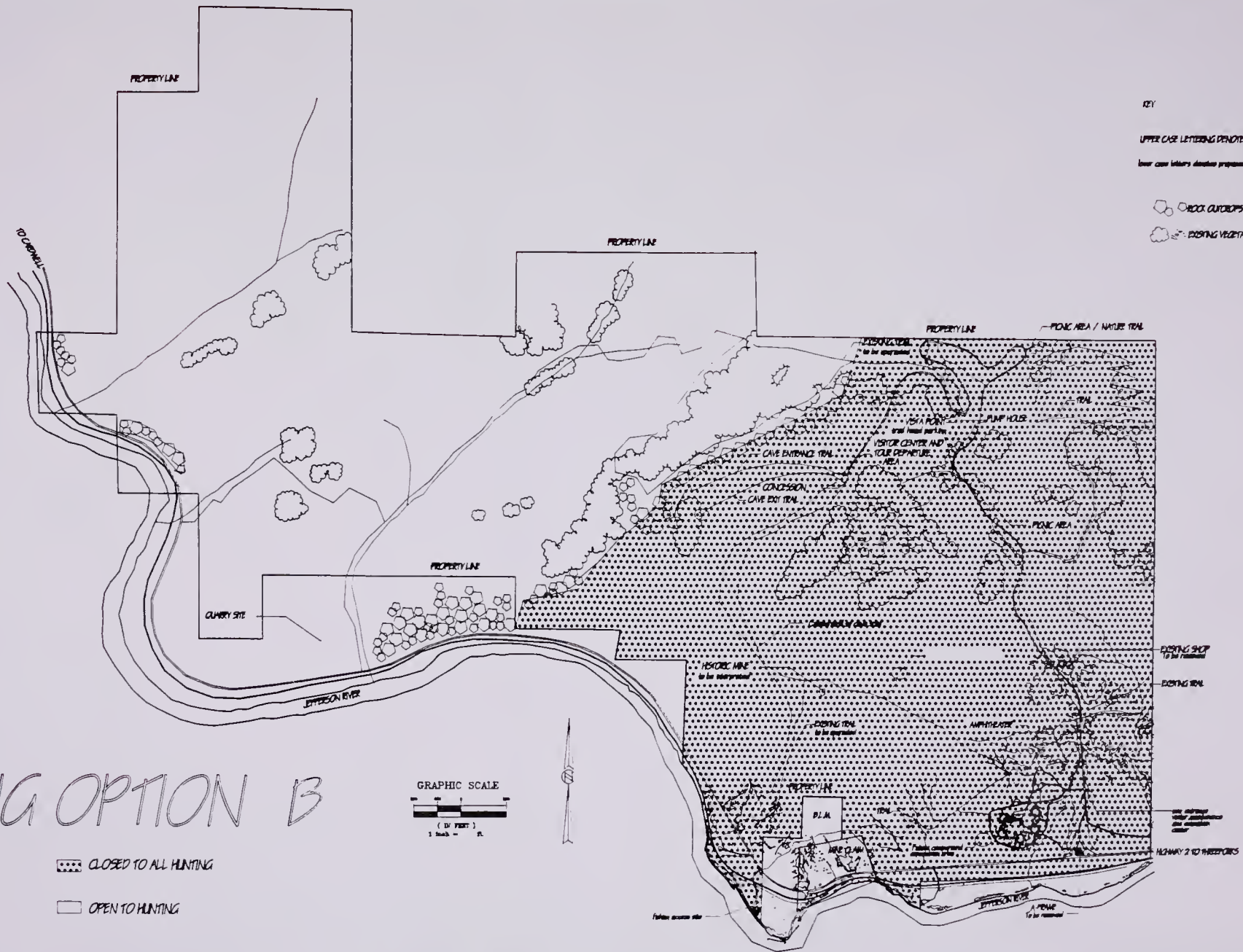
□ OPEN

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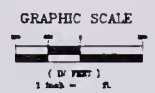
VERNS S. P.

SHEET: 1 of 1

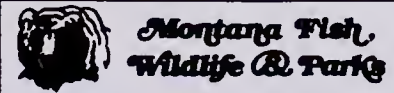


HUNTING OPTION B

CLOSED TO ALL HUNTING
 OPEN TO HUNTING



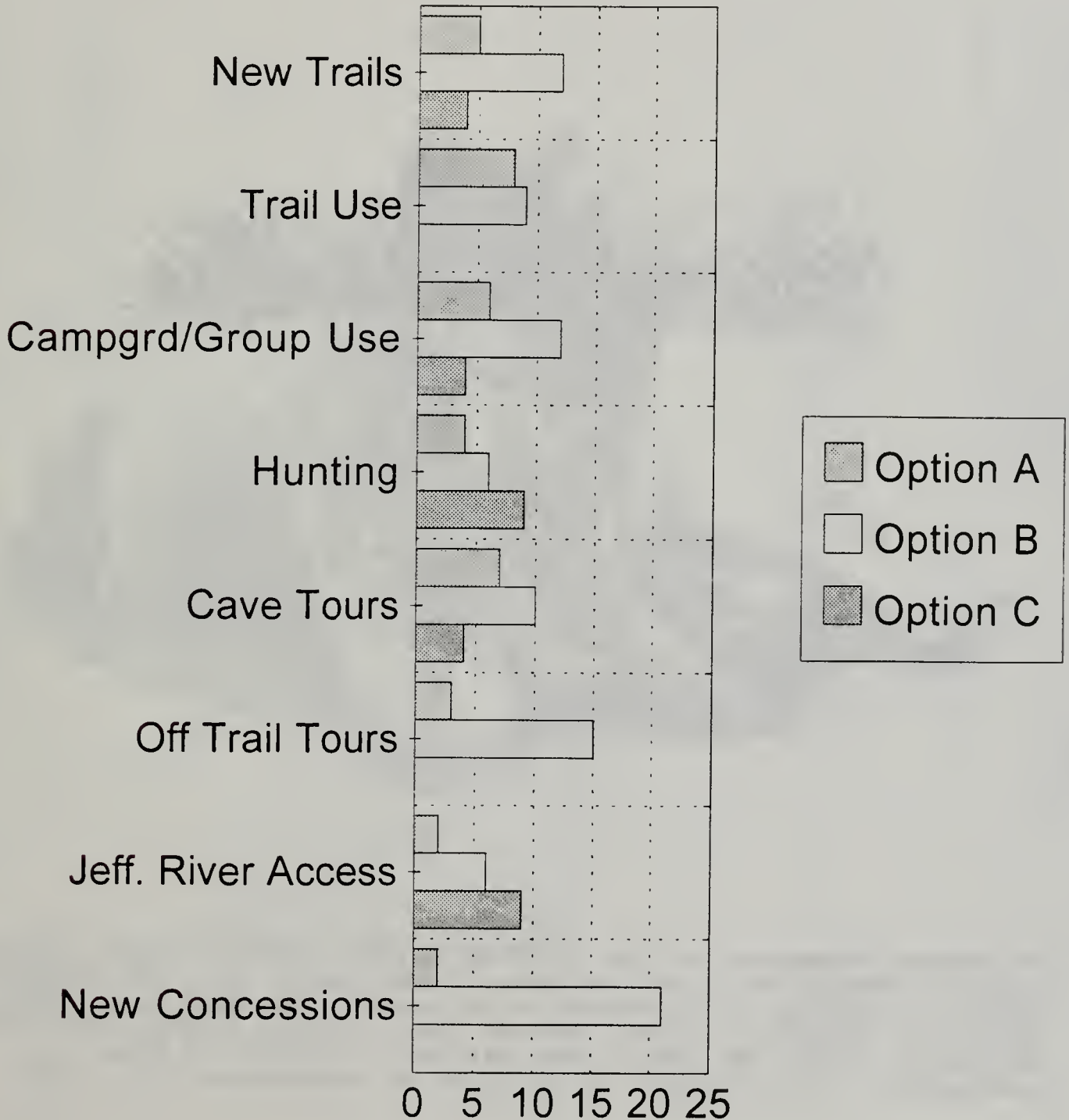
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LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS S. P.
 NEAR WHITEHALL M.T.

Lewis & Clark Caverns Mgmt. Plan Public Meeting Comments

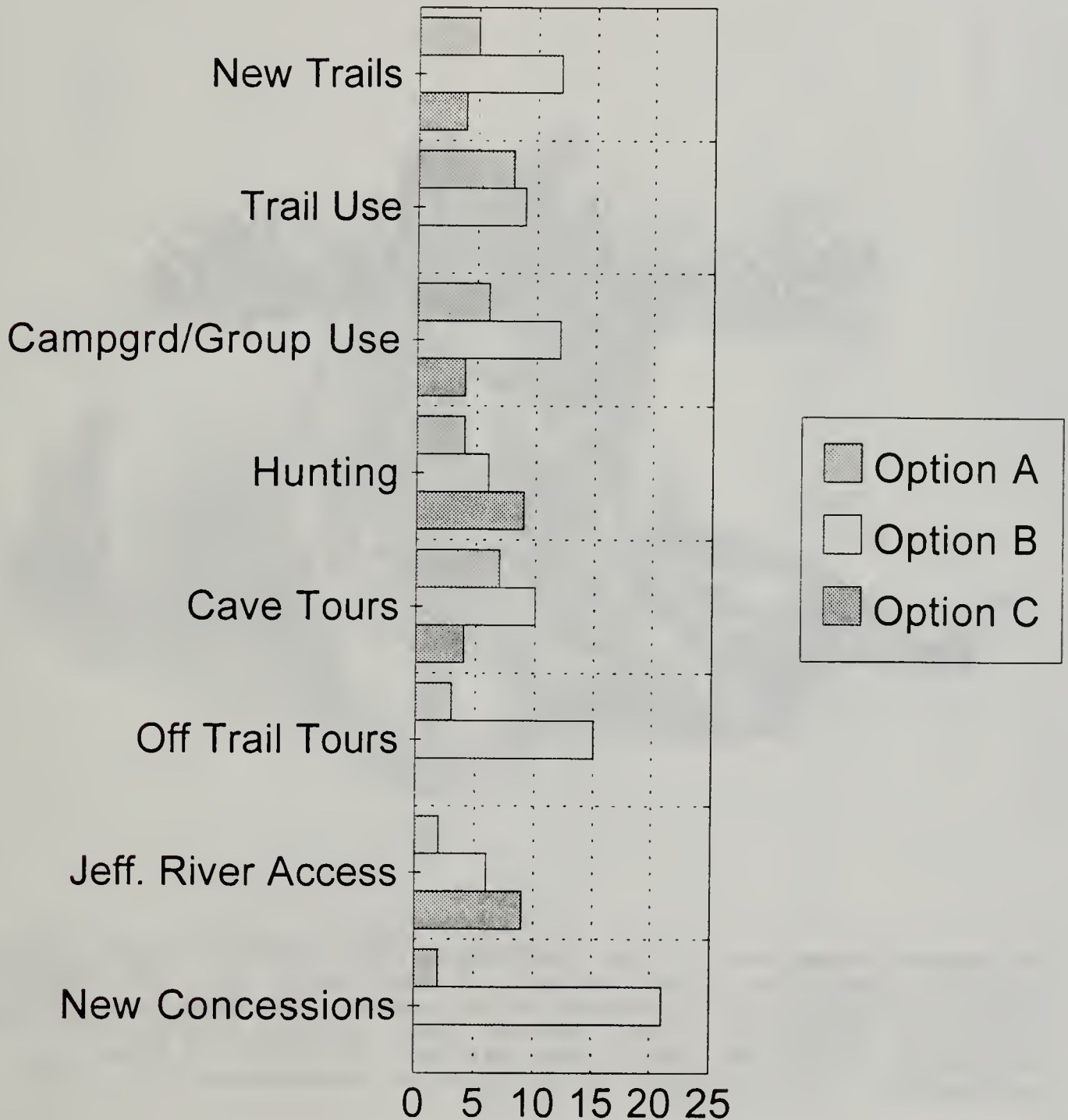
(from three separate meetings)

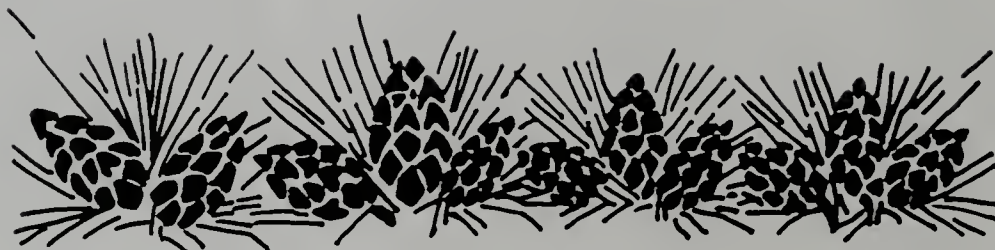




Lewis & Clark Caverns Mgmt. Plan Public Meeting Comments

(from three separate meetings)

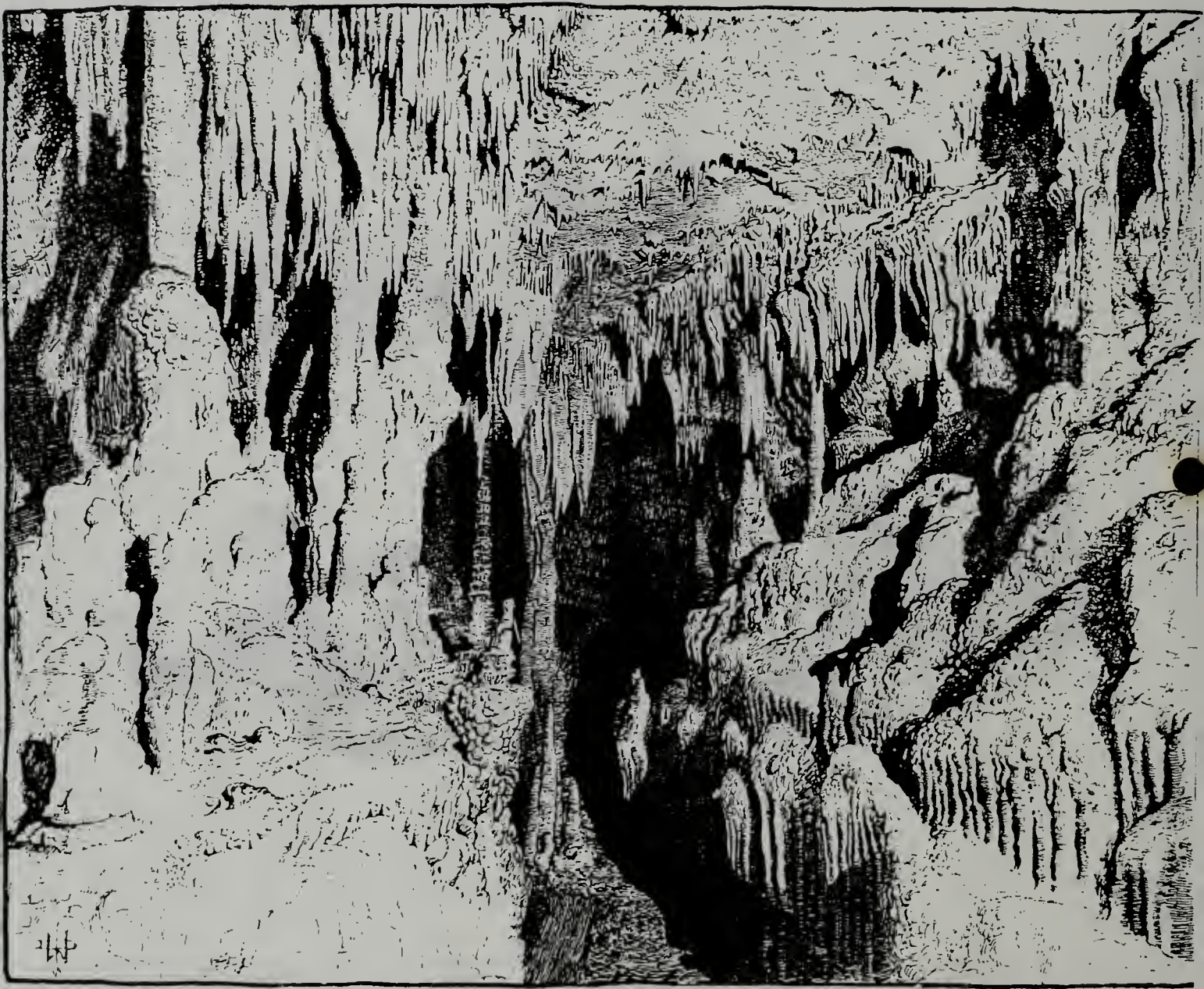




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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES





ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:
 MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES
 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 1a
b. Disruption, displacement erosion, compaction, moisture loss or overcovering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 1b
c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?	none	none	none		
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?	none	none	none		
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?	minor	none	none		see 1e
f. Other _____					

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources:

1a. Impacts to soil stability associated with alternative "B" and "C" would occur in some instances due to the construction and/or restoration of existing or new trail routes within the park. Trail use impacts could also affect soil stability for both of these alternatives, with alternative "C" incurring the greatest potential impact due to the inclusion of horses. Soil stability under trail use alternative "B" would be less impacted than alternative "C". Mitigation in the form of standard trail erosion control devices, proper trail route planning and construction practices would alleviate the vast majority of potential impacts.

1b. Impacts related to soil displacement, erosion, compaction, etc. could possibly occur in some instances for the same reasons as stated under 1a. The majority of trails proposed under alternative "B" and "C" will follow existing jeep trails, with only minor modification and construction being necessary. Overcovering loss, erosion, and compactions could be mitigated through proper trail route planning and the placement of erosion control devices. Some additional soil overcovering would be lost with the development of a new lower information center/entrance station/shop complex. The existing shop and A-Frame areas would be reclaimed resulting in essentially no net loss of soil covering.

1e. The potential exists that visitors would be exposed to various natural hazards related to the cave accessibility issue under alternative "B" with the initiation of public off-trail tours.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of air quality? (also see 13 (c))	none	none	none		
b. Creation of objectionable odors?	none	none	none		
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature patterns or any change in climate, local or regionally?	none	none	none		
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?	none	none	none		
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (also see 2a)	none	none	none		
f. Other _____					

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Discharge to surface water/alteration of quality including, not limited to temp., dissolved O ₂ , turbidity?	none	none	none		
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 3a
c. Alteration of course/magnitude of flood water or other flows?	none	none	none		
d. Changes in amount of surface water in any water body/creation of new body?	none	none	none		
e. Exposure of people/property to water related hazards such as flooding?	none	none	none		
f. Changes in quality of groundwater?	none	none	none		
g. Changes in quantity of groundwater?	none	none	none		
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?	none	none	none		
i. Effects to water rights/reservations?	none	none	none		
j. Effects on others as result of change in surface/groundwater quality?	none	none	none		
k. Effects on users resulting from change in surface/ground water quantity?	none	none	none		
l. For P-R/D-J will affect floodplain?	none	none	none		
m. For P-R/D-J will result in discharge affecting fed/state water quality regs	none	none	none		
n. Other _____					

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources:

3b. Surface runoff may be slightly altered under alternatives "B" and "C" related to the new trails and trail use issues. Minor construction related to trail head facilities may also slightly alter runoff patterns. The impacts would be minor and mitigation possible through careful trail planning and construction.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species, (including trees shrubs, grass, crops and aquatic plants)?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 4a
b. Alternation of a plant community?	none	none	none		
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened or endangered species?	none	none	none		
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?	none	none	none		
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farm land?	none	none	none		
g. Other _____					

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources:

4a Any construction activities have the potential of changing the overall abundance of plant species, however the extent of any disturbances would be minor. All disturbed areas would be revegetated with native species.

4e. The establishment or spread of noxious weeds could possible occur in relation to alternative B and C for both the new trail and trail use issues, mainly because of increased public access and use to areas of the park not currently utilized. Soil disturbances associated with any proposed construction activity provide the potential for noxious weed establishment. These impacts would be minor and controlled by mitigation efforts in the form of enhanced chemical, biological and mechanical weed control measures.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?	none	none	none		
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance or game or bird species?	minor	minor	minor		see 5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species	none	none	none		
d. Introduction of new species into area?	none	none	none		
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	none	none	none		
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?	none	none	none		
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (include harassment, legal/illegal harvest/other human activity)?	minor	minor	minor	yes	see 5g
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (also see 5f)	none	none	none		
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce/export any species not presently or historically occurring in receiving location (also see 5f)	none	none	none		
j. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources:

5b. Minor changes may occur in the abundance of game animals, particularly mule deer, under the proposed actions associated with all management alternatives related to the hunting issue. Under alternative "A", the no action alternative deer populations may be impacted due to high population numbers and associated overuse of their range. Alternative "B" and "C" may see some short term decreases in deer numbers but the overall health of the population would most likely be improved due to a decrease in negative impacts to vegetation and browse.

5g. An increase in stressful conditions to wildlife populations could occur with all of the proposed management alternatives. The no action "A" alternative would have the effect of potentially overpopulating the existing range of mule deer and could increase the number of landowner complaints concerning game damage from both deer and elk. Opening portions of the park to hunting would have a similar effect of increased stress levels, however the overall health of the deer herd would be enhanced by actively controlling their numbers. The development of new trails and the various types of use proposed could also increase stress levels to wildlife populations due to increased human presence. There may also be impacts associated with enhanced access to the off trail portions of the cave to the local bat population. Mitigation for these impacts would involve enhanced public educational efforts on proper wildlife viewing methods, active game management through public hunting, increased enforcement patrols related to hunting, and limiting public off-trail tours to specific time periods in order to minimize human caused impacts to the bat population.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Increase in existing noise levels?	minor	none	minor	yes	see 6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?	none	none	none	.	
c. Creation of electrostatic or electro- magnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health/property?	none	none	none		
d. Interference with audio or TV reception and operation?	none	none	none		
e. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of Cumulative/Secondary Effects noise/electrical):

6a. Noise levels commonly associated with the proposed construction activities (heavy equipment, power tools, etc.) temporarily increase when facilities are constructed.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity/profitability of existing land use of an area?	none	none	none		
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of scientific or educational importance?	none	none	none		
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit proposed action?	none	none	none		
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?	none	none	none		
e. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Land Resources:

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Risk of explosion or release of hazardous substances (including but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or their disruptions?	none	none	none	.	
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create the need for a new plan?	minor	none	none		see 8b
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?	none	none	none		
d. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)	minor	minor	minor	yes	see 8d
e. Other _____					

Narrative Description Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards:

8b. A revised emergency evacuation plan would be required in the event of an emergency in a section of the cave under alternative "B" of the cave accessibility issue which would initiate public off trail tours if such tours are deemed feasible following the initial investigation and study detailed in the cave management plan.

8d. Under all of the proposed management options chemical toxicants (herbicides) would be utilized for weed control purposes within the park on a limited basis. Mitigation is achieved by adhering to strict guidelines on the use of herbicides within the park, as outlined in the park's weed control action plan.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?	none	none	none		
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?	none	none	none		
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?	minor	minor	minor		see 9c
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?	minor	none	minor		see 9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?	none	none	none		
f. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Community Impacts:

9c. There could be a potentially positive impact on the level and distribution of employment related to the tourism industry for the communities surrounding Lewis and Clark Caverns due to the significance of the park as a major tourist attraction. This holds true for all the management alternatives, although one can assume that if recreational opportunities are enhanced as they would be under alternative "B" and "C", there would be a greater overall positive impact.

9d. The tourism industry could be positively affected by the enhancements proposed under alternative "B" and "C", as outlined above in paragraph 9c.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered government services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health or other government services? If any, specify:	none	none	none		.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?	none	none	none		
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?	none	none	none		
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?	none	none	none		
e. Define projected revenue sources	see 10e	see 10e	see 10e		
f. Define projected maintenance costs	see 10f	see 10f	see 10f		
g. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities:

10e. Project revenue sources would include a combination of any or all of the following: coal tax trust fund, motor boat fuel tax revenue, federal Land and Water Conservation funds, accommodations tax revenue and parks earned revenue (user fees).

10f. Maintenance costs would be incurred from the parks operation budget. An increase in the parks operations budget would be necessary to cover the increased maintenance needs associated with the enhancements proposed under alternative "B" and "C".

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

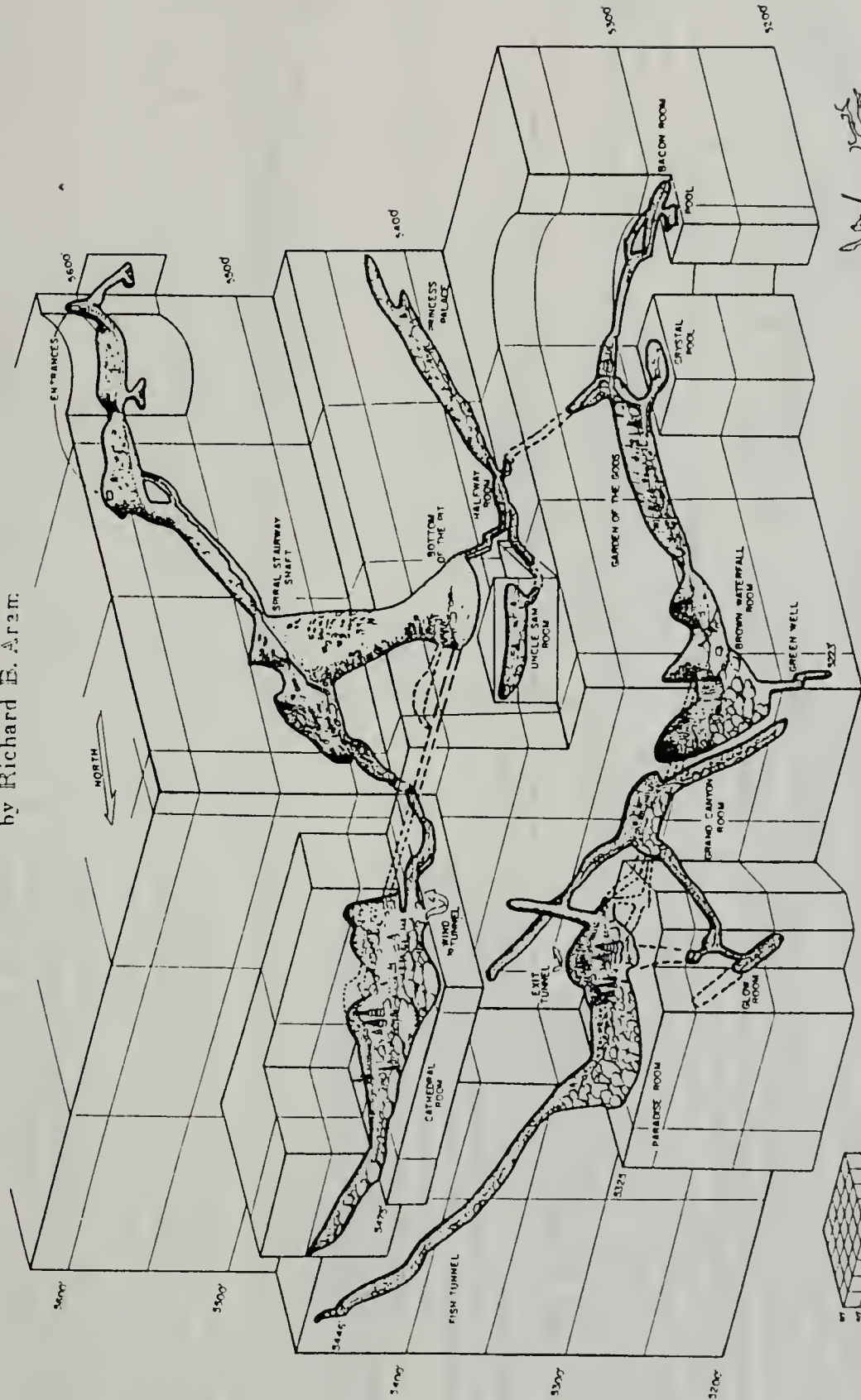
11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?	none	none	none		.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?	none	none	none		
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings? (attach tourism report)	minor	minor	minor		see 11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (also see 11a and 11c)	none	none	none		
e. Other _____					

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation:

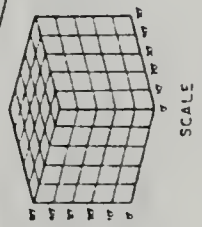
11c. Management alternatives "B" and "C" would greatly enhance both the quality and quantity of recreation and tourism opportunities

SCHEMATIC DRAWING OF LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS

by Richard E. Aram



Major rooms not shown:
WIND TUNNEL, HORSES BARN, POISON ROCK, GOATS WALK



SCALE



MAP VIEW

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

12. CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed (B)	A	C			
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, or paleontological importance?	none	none	none			
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?	none	none	none			
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?	none	none	none			
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO comments. (Also see 12a)	none	none	none			
e. Other: <u>Archeological studies and, if necessary, mitigation, will be pre-formed or construction plans changed to avoid disturbance.</u>						

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historic Resources:

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action result in:	Impact by Alternative			Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Proposed	A	C		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)	none	none	none		
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?	none	none	none		
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?	none	none	none		
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?	none	none	none		
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?	minor	minor	minor	yes	see 13e
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)	minor	minor	minor	yes	see 13f
g. For P-R/D-J, list any other federal or state permits required.	see 13g	n/a	see 13g		

Narrative Description & Evaluation of the Cumulative/Secondary Effects:

13e. The potential exists for public debate over the nature of the impacts associated with the hunting issue due to relatively small but somewhat organized pro and con forces specifically focusing on this issue. Mitigation would involve a significant public educational effort on the actual impacts to the affected resources related to the issue, and an ample public review period to insure that all interested parties have the chance to carefully examine the draft plan.

13f. same as above

13g. State: cultural clearance from SHPO

County: building and sanitation permits for new visitor center complex and new group use area

Federal: Corps of Engineers permit for boat ramp construction

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Three alternatives have been considered for this planning process:

Management Alternative A (no action):

A. This management alternative would essentially call for a continuation of existing management policies currently governing the operation of the park and provision of visitor services. The level of visitor service and associated recreational opportunities would basically revolve around the cave tour program, with only limited options for other activities and programs. Opportunities for enhanced interpretation of park resources outside of the cave ecosystem, new public educational programs and alternative recreational opportunities such as upland gamebird and big game hunting, fishing on the Jefferson River, and new trails would be curtailed even though public demand for these types of services, programs and facilities is growing. Existing facilities such as the A-Frame, shop complex, and campground group use areas would continue to deteriorate, thus failing to meet visitor needs, public safety requirements and accessibility standards. The result would be a decrease in overall visitor satisfaction and subsequent loss of user revenue. Required maintenance, specifically related to the shop, A-Frame information center, and campground group use activities will continue to escalate, requiring increases in overall operations and maintenance budgets, with little potential for an increase in user satisfaction. The management zoning concept would be utilized under this option to serve as a guide for park resource management, protection and enhancement.

Management Alternative B - Enhanced Park Recreational Opportunity Spectrum I (proposed alternative):

B. This, the proposed management alternative, would involve a dramatic enhancement of recreational opportunities, visitor services, and interpretative themes. New activities such as hunting, off trail cave tours, an expanded park trail system and developed fishing access on the Jefferson River would give visitors a more diverse array of activities, provide greater access to under utilized areas of the park, fulfill the park's obligation for compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), help to meet Division and Department employee and visitor safety requirements and greatly enrich the public understanding and appreciation of the unique natural, cultural, and historic resources found within the park outside of the well known cave system. Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department Goal C, "achieve a quality, financially sound State Park System" would also be addressed and enhanced through this alternative. The services, facilities and programs would fulfill the needs and demands of our users based on the results of staff and visitor surveys, public meetings and formal and informal discussions with park visitors, FWP staff and local community leaders. Local, regional and statewide tourism industries would benefit from the proposed actions due to the

B: (continued)

potential for increased lengths of stay for visitors in the area and the transformation of the park into a true destination point for tourists. The park and state park system as a whole would benefit due to increased user satisfaction and increased earned revenue. The increase in earned revenue would most likely offset any necessary increases in operations and maintenance budgets associated with the new and enhanced programs and facilities. The management zoning concept would be utilized under this option to serve as a guide for park resource management, protection and enhancement. Also Fish, Wildlife and Parks Goals A, B and C will be fulfilled through the initiation of this management alternative.

Management Alternative C - Enhanced Park Recreational Opportunity Spectrum II

C. This management alternative is similar in many aspects to alternative B with the major distinctions being, in most cases, a narrower range of improvements related to new or existing recreational opportunities, interpretative programs and the provision of visitor services. Under this management alternative only a small number of new trails would be developed, specifically those along what would be the major trail corridors within the park; trail use would actually be expanded under this alternative to include horseback riding. The existing camping cabins would be relocated to an area north of the present location; big game and bird hunting would be available in most areas of the park; cave tours would be limited to groups of 30 or less with no children under 5; no public off-trail tours would be permitted; both the primitive informal and proposed developed fishing access would be provided on the Jefferson River; new concession opportunities would not be investigated; the existing A-Frame information center would be upgraded to comply with ADA requirements, and a new permanent entrance station would be constructed. The positive impacts related to enhanced interpretation, visitor services and increased recreational opportunities would be less significant under this alternative. The potential for conflicts between user groups and various constituencies could increase, specifically related to trail use and hunting. Earned revenue could also be negatively impacted due to the exclusion of small children on tours.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Mitigation measures would vary depending on the proposed action(s). They are summarized in detail the environmental review portion of the EA.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required YES / NO

An EA is the appropriate level of analysis due to the relatively minor impacts to the physical and human environment related to the resources and recreational opportunities within the park and surrounding area.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Full implementation of the proposed alternative would greatly enhance the status of the park as a true destination attraction for Montana, while concurrently improving the overall protection of park resources and the provision of visitor services through increased recreational opportunities, interpretation, visitation and associated earned revenue, there by elevating the publics awareness, understanding and appreciation of the full spectrum of natural, historic and cultural assets, both above and below ground. Many of the proposed enhancements would involve changes only in park management and operations policies, specifically for hunting, trails and cave tours, with little or no alteration of the parks physical environment. The development of new trails in the park would essentially follow existing jeep trails that were constructed in the 1950's as fire roads. Only minor modification will be required to turn these old roads into hiking trails. The proposed developed fishing access on the Jefferson River would eliminate the safety problems currently existing at the informal primitive access site (due to limited sight distance for vehicles existing and entering the area). The construction of a new lower information center/shop and entrance station complex would eliminate the traffic flow safety problems that currently exist at the park entrance, enhance the working environment for park staff, provide a higher level of visitor service, enhance earned revenue collection by providing a single point of sale location, improve compliance with the new entrance station, and allow the park to comply fully with ADA standards. Overall the recreational opportunities offered at the park would be greatly enhanced with little or no disturbance to the park or surrounding environment, and little or no alteration of public use patterns. Positive impacts would be experienced throughout the local, regional and statewide tourism industries as a result of the implementation of the proposed alternative.

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST
HB495

Date August, 1997

Person Reviewing _____

Project Location: Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK Implementation of the programs, developments and facilities as detailed in the Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park Management Plan, including the following major proposals: One, the development of a new trail system utilizing existing unimproved jeep roads; Two, designation of selected trails as hiking only; Three, development of a group use camping and day use area adjacent to the main campground complex; Four, open portions of the park to upland gamebird and big game hunting; Five, enhance the quality of the cave tours; Six, investigate the possibility of special public off-trail cave tours; Seven, development of an improved river access at Limespur Fishing Access Site; Eight, investigate the possibility of new concession services; Nine, Replacement of the existing A-Frame Information Center with a new facility.

The following check list is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please x all that apply and comment as necessary.) Capital Construction projects - Prepared by D&C; Force Account Projects - Prepared by Region.

[x] A. New roadway or trail over undisturbed land?

Comments: The vast majority of the proposed trail system will follow existing unimproved jeep roads. These roads were constructed in the 1950's and early 1960's for the purpose of fire breaks. They have never been maintained and are currently closed to unauthorized vehicles. The trail system proposal would essentially place signs to officially designate these roads as trails for non-motorized public use (hiking). Due to erosion that has occurred in some areas and the steep grades the old roads followed in several locations, sections of the new trail system would have to be constructed over undisturbed ground.

[x] B. New building construction (buildings < 100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?

Comments: Issue 9 of the management plan calls for the replacement of the existing A-Frame Information Center located at the park entrance with a new 3000 square foot building. The new building would serve as the parks year around administrative and maintenance office, enabling permanent park staff to better monitor and manage public use during the off-season months. The new facility will provide a single point of sale for cave tour tickets, camping permits and day use passes with the inclusion of a permanent entrance station. The existing A-Frame building is in a serious state of disrepair and, in the opinion of Department engineers and architects, is beyond any cost effective repair. The structure is also not in compliance with American With Disabilities Act access standards.

[x] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?

Comments: The proposed new trail system, Jefferson River Access, campground group use area, and new public contact center issues all will involve excavations of 20 cubic yards or greater.

[] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?

Comments:

[] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?

Comments:

[x] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?

Comments: The proposed Jefferson River Access would involve the construction of a double wide boat ramp.

[] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by the State Historic Preservation Office)?

Comments:

[] H. Any new above ground utility lines?

Comments:

[] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

Comments:

[x] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects.

Comments: Opening the park to upland game bird and big game hunting has the potential to change existing off-season use patterns at the park.

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE ARE CHECKED, HB495 RULES MAY APPLY TO THIS PROPOSED WORK AND SHOULD BE DOCUMENTED ON THE MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB 495 Cross reference summary for further assistance.

